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WOMEN AND LOGIC

BY EDWARD E. HALE

THAT women are not logical is one of the recognized conventions of social life. It is one of those understandings, we might say, often enough referred to if rarely stated definitely, made the foundation of allusion or hint if not so often uttered outright. It certainly is not often stated in so many words. In fact, one would hardly know where to turn for a statement, not to say the first statement of it. And if you should succeed in finding half a dozen statements of the matter you would look long before you found any discussion of it. The most recent and indeed the only discussion that I know is that of Weininger in his book on *Sex and Character*. It may interest some who have long held this tenet because other people did, or as gained unconsciously from literature, or in some other ready-made fashion, to know grounds on which they may base a more reasoned belief.

Weininger's view is shortly this: One very necessary part of the logical faculty is memory. In order to form and use the general conceptions by which logical operations are carried on, one must have memory. In using the term A in some demonstration, for instance, one must have memory enough to be sure that A at the end stands for what A stood for at the beginning. Or if A stands for some generalization, one must have memory of the matter yesterday, or the day before, or some time other than the present to be able to generalize at all. Only so can we understand the fundamental proposition of Logic, A=A. If we had no memory this proposition would merely mean that the A we had in mind at one time is the same as the A we have in mind at some other time, which might or might not be the case. Further, Weininger's view is that the absolute woman has no memory. She appreciates the present keenly: whether

it be the same as the past or not is a matter of indifference to her; she knows and cares nothing at all about it. Of course all women are not like that; actual women may have more memory or less, just as they may have more or less appreciation of the present. But the typical woman is without memory.

"And so it appears," says Weininger, "that woman is without logic."

If it do not so appear to any one, one may re-examine the premises. It may be incorrect to say that logic depends on memory, one can look into that idea; or it may be incorrect to say that women have no memory.

Thus our attention is attracted to other matters than the main matter with which we started. We do not look directly at the proposition, we get at it indirectly, by certain premises. Perhaps if we analyze them we shall be passed along from point to point until we get to something on which everybody will agree. We shall no longer consider whether women are logical or not. We shall leave such matters and consider especially women and their memory on one hand, or logic and its generalizations on the other, or something else. That is something which would be very interesting to do, but as Weininger himself has done so, there is no need of doing it now. Let us rather do the other thing, examine the general proposition directly; make a frontal attack, as one might say; consider the various women we see, know, or can learn about to see whether they are logical or not.

Of course, in such a study, one may be delayed at the very outset by all sorts of minor inquiries, such as, What do you mean by being logical? What is Logic? and the like. I shall not stop for such views, for if I do, we should never get started. Or at any rate, I shall stop for only one prior consideration, namely this, that it may well be that most women are illogical, for most men are.

Most men are not logical, in the scholastic sense at least. They have no idea even of what logic is. They have never studied logic, have never read a book on logic, never talked about logic. They would not be able to say what it was if you asked them. If you offer them a logical problem they have no idea of the logical way of solving it; they go ahead on a common-sense basis. For instance, if you say, "Such an one must be sick, for if he were well, he would be here."

The man acquainted with logic sees at once the fallacy of the illicit major, of denying the antecedent. Since he is not here, it is said, he is not well. He sees that the matter is a confused hypothetical syllogism of the form:—If A is B, A is C. But A is not B. A is not C. The average man, however, unacquainted with logic, will see nothing of the kind, he would not understand all about this A, B, C, or about majors and antecedents. He arrives at the same end by another process which he calls the common-sense process. When you say, "He must be sick, for if he were well he would be here," he says: "No, perhaps he is kept away for some other reason. In fact, he said something to me about going to the theater to-night." The average man would decide the question correctly, perhaps, but in a non-logical way, in a way which though not illogical had nothing at all to do with formal logic. So men, if not illogical, are as a rule non-logical or extra-logical, and it would be but natural that women should be so too. That is, they have no direct understanding of logic any more than men have. They have almost never studied logic; the proportion of women who have been to college is much less than with men, and it is in college chiefly that logic is studied. Nor have women read books on logic; there are not very many books on logic, and what there are are usually text-books which do not come in woman's way. Nor do women, as a rule, talk about logic with each other or with any one else, for the subject never comes into their minds. They may say that one or another is logical or illogical, but that is a different matter. Women are just like men in this respect. If you put to them a logical problem they will solve it by common-sense methods. They may be correct or they may not, but they will never use logical methods.

There is no use then, with women or men either, in discussing the question whether they are logical in the sense of the schools. Every one knows at once that in that sense women are non-logical and men, too. Whether "non-logical" and "illogical" are the same thing does not need to be discussed; we know just what it is that is meant.

We must look, then, for some other logic than the logic of the schools and the school-books if we want a question to discuss for a logic of the street, of the cross-road, of every-day life. And we shall have no difficulty in finding something that will be useful We often hear that such a person

is logical or not, or that such a thing is. We have only to examine such statements to see what sort of logic it is that is in mind.

Of course the word "logical," as used in common speech, often means that we are thinking of something argumentative. We speak of a logical reason, demonstration, inference, or something of the sort. That does not mean the logic of the schools, but any kind of correct reasoning, whether based on common-sense or on anything else. Such uses, however, would probably hold a minor place in our thinking and speaking of things as logical. We should find, could we count up cases, that we more often use the words *logic* or *logical* in a different way. We more often speak of a logical order or development or sequence or outcome or something of that sort. We might speak of a logical result or a logical line of conduct, or we might speak of the logic of history or the logic of fact, where evidently there is no immediate connection with argument.

We shall find, indeed, that this idea of logic, this non-argumentative logic as we may say, has penetrated into various phases of thought where there is no question of argument, or indeed where we should say there is no question of logic. Thus in the field of art we should find that people have more and more got into the habit of speaking of logic as an element of art, not, of course, in any argumentative sense, but in the sense of natural and necessary and such as is demanded by the conditions of the case. This use is quite common among writers on music and to some degree among writers on painting, but it is most usual among writers on the drama. Almost all writers on the drama speak of a logical development, generally of plot, but sometimes of character. Mr. Archer in his latest book, that on *Playmaking*, gives a whole chapter to logic. We shall not think that this logic is the logic of schools or anything of the sort. We might imagine at first that the matter had something argumentative about it as with plays that support a thesis. But there is generally nothing argumentative about the matter any more than there is in the parallel use of the word *convincing*. People say nowadays that all sorts of things are convincing, meaning thereby that they make a definite and permanent impression. "Such and such a character is convincing," one would say, though without any sense of argument, though usually when we think

of convincing anybody we think of arguing with him. But Mr. Archer has no idea of argument in his chapter on Logic in play-making. He sometimes speaks of proving things, but generally he has in mind the notions of coherence and consistency, the having things seem natural and the way they ought to be, the full development of all the different lines of any subject. It is not necessary to tell what Mr. Archer has to say about the logic of play-making; in fact it would be rather confusing to try to state it. Our only interest is that Mr. Archer and a great many other people have an idea about a logic which is not the logic of the schools nor the logic of argument. Logic with them is something other than a scholastic treatise or a definite demonstration. Just what it is we need not inquire now.

So when it is said that men are logical we need not suppose that it means that they are particularly argumentative. It may mean that they have a sense of consistency and coherence, that they have a feeling of what is necessary, of how a matter ought to turn out, of what is proper. On the other hand, it often does mean that they are good or sound in argument. Thus Abraham Lincoln in the estimation of those who write about him was one of the most logical of men. Those who think and say this of him almost always have in mind his powers and processes in argument. They say that he had remarkable power in getting right at the kernel or the key to any question; that he found out the especial point of importance and made that absolutely sure, that he put aside the things of no importance so that people disregarded them, and other such things. If a person wanted to argue logically and convincingly, they would advise him to study the work of Lincoln, and see how he worked out the problems which came before him. A study of Lincoln would make a man strong in argument, a logical man from that standpoint. So also people very often speak of St. Paul in the same way. They say that he is logical, meaning that he is great in argument. There is a curious passage by Dr. Van Dyke in which he says that St. Paul was great in logic, but that his mysticism was a great safeguard to his logic, and his intense practicality was a safeguard to his mysticism, and his broad, warm sympathetic humanity was the safeguard to his practicality. Here we have the interesting idea that logic is something dangerous, something that will lead one astray (we may suppose) if

one follow it out too definitely. But aside from that, the idea is that logic is a matter of argument, of proving something, of making a statement convincing by showing its connection with something else. With St. Paul as with Lincoln, as most men speak of him, logic is a matter of demonstration and proof.

Indeed, such a view is not uncommon. When we say that women are illogical we often mean that when they try to prove anything they come out at an illogical result or that they get at their result by illogical methods, that they do not argue by making inferences or deductions, but determine their result by intuition or by some other method known to themselves, or if not consciously known, at least customary. Thus a woman sees some one, for instance, and instantly forms the idea that he is hypocritical. Just how she forms this idea she does not know; it appears suddenly in her mind in definite form; it is an intuition. If you ask the reason for it, however, she will give you one. She will say it is because his eyes are too close together, or because the binding on his hat is shiny, or because one of the buttons was off his coat, or some other thing that you have not noticed at all, and that if you did notice it you would never think of connecting with hypocrisy. Nor does she really think of any connection, but just as the idea of his being hypocritical popped into her mind as soon as she saw the man, so the idea of his eyes being too close together, or of the buttons being off, or of the binding being shiny, pops into her head when you ask for the reason for such an idea. And as soon as the idea comes into her head she utters it so as to be rid of it, perhaps. In this way women make up their minds, and therefore often seem to form opinions in a very illogical way. But these things are not really illogical. It is merely that they have nothing at all to do with logic. They have nothing to do with logic considered as argument, that is.

When we consider logic a little differently, such things may be logical enough. If we mean by logic a sort of consistency or coherency, a full development or a natural outcome or something of the sort, then we shall often find that these intuitions of women are often logical enough. Thus as to man's being hypocritical because his eyes are too close together. There is really no connection, and yet as soon as the idea is suggested there is something in the

expression of that narrow, intense face that irresistibly suggests all sorts of things that are hypocritical.

So when we are considering the logical element in woman's character we must remember that there are different kinds of logic. There is the logic of the schools, the logic of argument, the logic of consistency,—people even will speak of the logic of passion. We might be able to show without much difficulty that all the different kinds of logic were closely related to each other, but we need not do that now. The main thing now is to consider women and see whether they have any logic, and, if so, what kind of logic it is.

The easiest way to do this is not to go to some woman and ask her questions, but to look about and see if you do not see or hear something that bears upon the subject. The other day I was told the following:

One lady met another and they spoke about religion. One of them said that she was inclined to Christian Science. The other said that she did not like Christian Science because Christian Scientists were illogical, and she disliked illogical people. She mentioned a friend who was a Christian Scientist who had fallen down a coal-hole, and who, on having sued for damages, had received $400. She meant, I suppose, that it was inconsistent in one who did not believe in bodily hurt to exact money from people who had hurt her body. The first lady appeared also to be inclined to Unitarianism; at least she sent her children to the Unitarian Church, although she did not go herself. Her husband was a man of scientific training, and she liked to look at things in a scientific and logical way.

Now it is a cheap and conventional wit that will laugh at these ladies who admired logic when they had neither of them studied the logic of the schools nor had any idea as to what it was. They did not, of course, have any idea of scholastic logic in mind; certainly they did not have in mind any science or mode of thought that neither of them knew anything about. They used the term evidently with quite definite notions of its meaning.

It did not represent to them what it would have represented in the mouth of a professor in a lecture-room, nor in the mouth of a lawyer in a law-court. But it was used as accurately and correctly as most abstract terms are used, and if one is careful it offers a perfectly good means of getting at what each thought.

One meant by *logic* consistency between theory and practice; the other meant an exact and systematic way of thinking. Each liked logic in her own sense, though each, it may be remarked, was illogical in the sense of the other. It surely shows inconsistency between theory and practice to approve of Unitarianism and not go to a Unitarian Church, and it shows a lack of exact and systematic thinking to dislike Christian Science because one Christian Scientist has been inconsistent. But however illogical in the opinion of others, each of these ladies had the highest opinion of logic in her own sense. And so I incline to believe have most women.

One could go on and without much difficulty collect many examples of people, particularly women, saying that such and such things were logical and then doing something else, and thus showing either that they had no care for logical action or, which is more likely, that they were really governed by a logic very different from what they commonly thought of as logic. This last is the most likely. People in their actions are governed by all sorts of motives and very often by motives or causes which they themselves know nothing about. So they very often seem to act for reasons very different from the true ones, or they often act apparently for no reason at all.

An example of this latter sort may be found in the conduct of Annunciata Fearns at the trial of her father. She was in the witness-box and at a certain time and a certain question of the judge she hesitated, could not answer, and finally "in the unreflecting madness of her torment she sprang down the steps from the witness-box." When she had time to think she wished to go back there again. In this case the girl did something quite irrational, there was no reason for it, it was done in unreflecting madness. That is, so it seemed. Really, however, there was a perfectly plain reason, though one of which she was not at all conscious. Annunciata Fearns was not a real person, but a person in one of the novels of Mr. Arnold Bennett. In that novel, *Whom God Hath Joined,* Mr. Bennett presents all his characters as acting at one time or another under the influence of what he calls "an irresistible and tremendous force," so that they absolutely must do what they do and cannot possibly do anything else.

But there is another and better example to be found among

Mr. Arnold Bennett's women and that is an incident concerning Maggie and Edwin Clayhanger. Mr. Bennett has been telling how Edwin, after he had got well grown up and practically independent, used to indulge in extravagances, as his old father would have thought, and how he was always interested to see whether his father would notice them. His father usually did not notice the matters of importance, but did notice some absolute trifle. Then "Maggie would say, 'I told you what would be happening'" which would annoy Edwin. "His annoyance was caused less by Maggie's I told you so, than by her lack of logic." This lack of logic consisted in thinking it natural that her father should notice some inconceivable trifle and go into a passion. Edwin would not have minded if she had spoken of her father's noticing something large and important, but he never did. But here it was not Maggie but her father who was illogical, or rather inconsistent. He noticed the little expenses, but he did not notice the big ones; there seemed no consistency in his way of doing. Maggie was not particularly illogical in saying, "I told you so," when he spoke. She may have been as illogical as he, but even that is not obvious.

These last people Annunciata and Maggie are chosen from literature, not from life. It is rather easier to study examples in literature than in life, but of course the results when found are not quite so convincing. When we have an example chosen from real life, we can only say, "Yes, people really are like that," or else, "Some people are certainly like that," and then if we mean to decline the inference offered, we must say that those people are exceptional or something of the sort. But with cases chosen from literature, we shall easily say, "Oh, that is only in a novel, that is only what Mr. Bennett thinks, or what he wants in that story. Real people do not behave so." Naturally, examples from fiction do not have the stamp of truth that those have who are chosen from life. But the fact that they appear in fiction shows at least that the author thought that they seemed natural, and the fact that we read about them without noticing that they are unnatural shows that we think so too. So I think we may choose examples of logical or illogical women from fiction as well as from life. Mr. Bennett is supposed to have a very great knowledge of the way women behave and feel and think. So

have other writers, Mr. Hardy and Mr. James, for instance. The former is rather famous for having his women illogical: that is, he is apt to present them as acting in ways that seem entirely opposed to reason and logic, in a manner that seems entirely the result of momentary whim and fancy. Really we should probably find as in the case of Annunciata that the action of his women is as reasonable, as much the result of definite and known causes, namely as logical, as is the action of any other women, or men either.

An interesting example is the case of Orloff and his wife as they appear in one of the stories of Maxim Gorki. Orloff was an argumentative sort of person, very regular and particular about doing everything in a perfectly reasonable sort of way. That was his way of thinking and he felt that it was natural that it should be so, seeing that he was a man. Women, he felt, were different; they did not understand logical argument; they argued enough but never logically. He often thought about his wife who was not only wholly illogical herself, but wholly unable to appreciate the logic of any one else. She was a person of blind primitive feeling. (Both it should be said were Russian peasants.)

"It would be so easy for him, he thought, to cut away the abnormal excrescence from her brain by the cold logic of his mind. What a pity that . . . it was impossible to see her frequently (they had become separated), so that day by day he might shake loose everything which barred off her mind from the action of logic."

They made quite a typical pair, Orloff and his wife (of the conventional type), he "perfectly logical and quite regularly founded on a long series of premises from the distant past," she a primitive creature of immediate emotions, who was more likely to be swayed by the enthusiasm of metaphysics than by the slow approach of logic.

There is a third way in which we can approach this question, a sort of combination of the methods of life and of literature. We can look into literature to see what women say about logic. I do not mean what books they have written on the subject, indeed I suppose they do not write any at all; nor what they say when they are consciously dealing with the subject, if they ever do, for they would very probably be mistaken or misled in such writings, as people are very apt to be who try to gather together their vague feelings and diffuse ideas on some special subject. We shall

do better to watch for what they say by the way, to pick up hints of what they think of logic while they are talking of something else, to see how the idea comes to expression in all that they say, and what it seems to be. That is a way we often go about to find what we think of a matter. We do not always go to them and say, What do you think of such and such a thing? We notice and we see what they chance to say about it, or we argue back from what they say or do, as to what they must really think. Thus a young man who wishes to know what a very dear young woman thinks of him, or how she feels, does not at first go right up to her and ask. He notices what she says and does, he judges from hints, he makes his inferences from her acts. This is what the lawyers call unconscious testimony; they rate it highly, and rightly so, for it is a perfectly sound basis for judgment. One may make false inference from it, of course, or from any other fact, but if not one comes very near the truth.

Let us therefore look in this way for logic in the writings of women who appear to be typical. Let us see if in speaking of other things they do not give us some idea of what they think about logic. And first I will take as example one who all will allow is a thoroughly typical American woman, Miss Jane Addams.

There are in Miss Addams' books a number of uses of the word *logic* and its derivatives, not very many but enough to form some idea of her conception of the subject. Once it is used in the conventional sense, "quibbles of logic." Twice she uses it in reference to close development of theory, and here, significantly, she brings it into contact with the experience of life. "Was Tolstoi more logical than life warrants?" she asks. So she and her friends "repeated to each other that in all practical judgments and decisions of life we must part company with logic." A strange but common idea that logic, which purports to be the science of the nature of sound thought, should somehow be unconnected with, even opposed to life.

Such uses are probably quite conventional. But usually in her work *logical* means much the same as *consistent*, in accordance with good and sound thought. Thus she remarks that "there was a certain logic in giving the franchise only to grown men;" *i. e.*, it was, at the time, a sound and reasonable thing to do. Sometimes this consistency is only with

whatever plan, good or bad, happens to be under discussion, but often it is a consistency with some unstated and unformulated scheme or system of careful scientists. Thus "Germany is gradually evolving with a Government logically fitted to cope with the industrial situation of the twentieth century," because in Germany presumably there are people who think out problems on an idealistic basis, on a large scale,—arguing doubtless as they do so, but not all argument. We might make a number of other quotations from Miss Addams' works, but these will give the correct idea. This is the substance of what she says here and there about logic, the substance of what she thinks about it, in short, her ideas of logic.

In other words, omitting the few cases where the word means school logic or has some connection with argument, the conception of logic which appears from these uses of the word, and which therefore seems (unconsciously perhaps) to have its place in Miss Addams' mind, to regulate her ideas and language, is that of some natural and consistent system of sound thought not necessarily in the form of argument nor regulated by definite and known rules, but such as common-sense people and scientific thinkers alike would not only admit but recognize as necessarily right. She seems to recognize some system of consistent and natural thought according to which the world goes round and people carry on their affairs, as it has gone round and as they have carried them on for centuries. Not a cold, an "inexorable" logic as they sometimes say, not a fine-spun or abstruse logic, but a logic which opens to us as nearly as may be with us mortals the order of the universe, the common-sense nature of the way things go.

This is, doubtless, not what people have in mind when they say women are illogical. But if there are many women (and why not?) who, like Miss Addams, have even a slight conception of such a scheme, may we not think that their logic may be as good at least as that of the average man?

Edward E. Hale.